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African Coffee Economy at the Crossroads: The Cases from Tanzania, Ethiopia and Rwanda-Preface

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PREFACE

This supplementary issue presents some of the results of a 3-year research project funded as part of a Grant-in-Aid of Scientific Research (Project No. 16252005 headed by Jun Ikeno, Kyoto University) from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science for the 2004 to 2006 academic years.

African coffee production areas have been affected by adverse economic, environmental, and political conditions, including low international prices, insufficient rainfall, and civil wars. As a result, coffee production throughout Africa has decreased since the early 1990s, whereas production in Latin America and the Asia/Pacific has increased. It is important to determine how to increase coffee production and prices. Nevertheless, these are not necessarily the sole remedies to the problems facing African coffee production. Strategies for coping with the adverse coffee economy at the individual, household, and local area levels are not limited to within the coffee sub-sector. As producing coffee is part of a multiple livelihood strategy, it is possible that producers in the broad sense have increased the ratio of alternative strategies at the expense of coffee production. Therefore, we need to consider coffee production in a wider socioeconomic context. Our research examined the response of coffee producers to specific adverse conditions in each African country.

We selected Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Rwanda in Eastern Africa as focal countries. In Tanzania, the decline in coffee production has proceeded gradually, because the dramatic decline in production in the Northern Highlands was offset by increased production in the Southern Highlands. We concentrated on investigating the retreat from coffee in the Northern Highlands. Within the Northern Highlands, there are different coping strategies among the socioeconomic sub-units, as described in three articles. In Ethiopia, after the collapse of the socialist regime in 1991, cooperatives made a breakthrough in fair-trade and organic coffee, enabling them to survive. These coffee cooperatives have provided even higher profits to coffee farmers than have private traders. In Rwanda, coffee production has recovered gradually. Coffee still offers the most profitable cash income opportunity in some areas. This has led to the emergence of a rather rigorous sharecropping system compared with the fixed-rate tenant systems in other areas of Rwanda. The aforementioned factors are the most noteworthy ones identified in each country. We hope that these case studies provide a perspective for understanding the differences in the performance of coffee production among African countries.

Finally, we greatly appreciate the assistance of governmental organizations, cooperatives, coffee farmers, and other people with our research in Tanzania, Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Japan. For instance, the Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH) in Tanzania allowed us to conduct research in the Northern Highlands; cooperative societies in Ethiopia gave us useful data on their

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Jun IKENO